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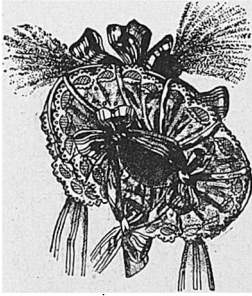
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THE SWAY OF THE CRINOLINE

BY HELEN INGERSOLL.

Illustrated from drawings by contemporary artists.



COSTUME with all its vagaries, is the last study in which we would expect to find illustrations of the survival of the fittest, yet even among laces and ribbons—all the dainty frou-frou of woman's belongings—that which is most appropriate to the time and the manners is surest to be handed down.



The history of French costume since the beginning of the nineteenth century may naturally be divided into two parts. One, the Napoleonic era, when short waists and clinging draperies prevailed; the other, dating from the Revolution of July, 1830, when Louis Philippe ascended to the people's throne of France and inaugurated a period of great expansion in various articles of dress. The years between the fall of the Empire and the enthronement of the "King of the Tricolor," saw the gradual merging of the one motive of dress into the other; and, just as the changing lights on the stage give a different spirit to a scene, so the changing costume ushered in a new act of the spectacular drama of French life the theater of national history.

Fair women gave themselves up to romance during the first years of Louis Philippe's reign, fixing the name Romantic Age upon that period of dress. They endeavored to model themselves after Byron's heroines, "dined on hummingbird's eggs," and fairly made themselves ill by trying to induce and maintain an "interesting" pallor and frailty. Belles dabbled in art and letters. They criticised with equal indifference the singers in a favorite opera or the gown of Madame in front of them, and raved over the pictures of Delaroche and Vernet. Feminine dress was somewhat affected by the paintings in the salons, and by the stage. All manner of coiffures were copied exactly from the heroines of artist or dramatist.



The typical gowns of the period seem charming as we look back at them, perhaps through the glamour caused by our modern adaptations of the same styles; but then, as always, they were designed for a slender figure. What stout woman could with any conscience wear skirts just reaching to the ankles, and sleeves projecting on each side, as if the panniers of the Old Régime had been raised to the shoulders of the fair dames of 1830. These sleeves were puffed out so far that whalebones were sometimes run around the greatest circumference, or little balloons stuffed with down kept the soft fabrics distended; over each shoulder flared multiple capes sloping into points at the broad belt, which now lay in a natural position. The skirts were very wide at the bottom, and were often much trimmed.

Turbans, of every size and material, had never lost their popularity since their introduction in Napoleon's time, and the performance of "La Juive" deluged Paris with Jewish styles. But



the most picturesque feature of the fashions of 1830 was the hat. It had a great flaring brim, heavily trimmed with lace; long soft ostrich-feathers curled among the puffs of lace and bow-knots of ribbon about the crown, or nodded over the edge; and the whole was set jauntily on one side of the head, with many yards of tulle or ribbon fluttering uselessly about the shoulders. Another style of headgear, the great bonnet fashioned after a coal-scuttle, was designed to cover an elaborate coiffure. An old illustration shows a hair-dresser compelled to mount upon stilts in order to twist up the locks of a lady sitting in front of him. The hairdresser was a very important person about 1830, and he clustered Madame's curls about her temples, or piled huge puffs and bow-knots

of hair on top of her head in harmony with the shape of her face.

Women flourished under the Monarchy of July. They went alone to lectures and salons, and there was even a foreshadowing of the "new woman," since they handled stocks on the Bourse, wearing there a severe costume suitable to the place, for the French woman never forgot appropriateness.



In the brilliant evenings the Parisiennes walked under the trees of the Champs Elysées in gowns of organdie or muslin, and enfolded themselves in the pelerine, or a double mantle, or capes of black lace lined with colored taffeta; and at the opera-balls, during the Carnival, the great majority of women concealed themselves under dominoes of every color. It was at one of these balls that the Prince de Joinville, son of Louis Philippe, received his partner from the gallery by means of friendly hands in the tiers of boxes, who passed her down to him outside the gilded fronts.

Scarfs were still much used in summer, and draped in many graceful ways. A new fashion that might be seen in the carriages at Longchamps, which had been the great show-place of society since the Reign of Terror, was that of wearing blouses; and the belles sometimes owned as many as thirty of these convenient articles, made of all materials,



from percale for the morning, to fine India muslin for evening wear. They adopted whichever one in color, or fashion best harmonized with their mood of the moment. The cane-zou, a sort of primitive jersey, was occasionally worn with separate skirts. After the Algerian victories the tricolored stuffs, always brought out when an exciting event stirred up the volatile but ever patriotic Parisians, were somewhat used.

The appearance of "The Pickwick Papers," in England, in 1836, gave the name of Dickens's hero to coats, canes, and to hats with narrow brims curved up at the side, as in the great novelist's drawings of the immortal Pickwick.



A pretty variation in the mode of using veils arose among the women about the same time, wherein the large scarf or veil was so thrown back from the face as to lie between the crown and brim of the huge bonnet, leaving its long ends hanging softly like a fichu to the waist. Young married women wore upon their heads, at home, little tufts of lace and ribbon; and for a while these small caps were to be seen at the theater instead of flaring hatbrims, to the great relief of the remainder of the audience.



The year 1840 introduced into Paris a sudden fancy for applying to various objects and persons names borrowed from the menagerie in the Jardin des Plantes. Grooms were then first called "tigers," and such a fair dame as in former times would have been called *une elegante*, became now *une lionne*, a title that Alfred de Musset had given to one of his heroines, when he sought rhymes for *à Barcelone, à l'automne*, and the like. *Les lionnes* were of

different species, but their general characteristic was a disposition to copy the men; to ride on horseback, an exercise to which French women do not seem to be greatly attracted; to attend steeple-chases; to shoot, and to show no great disinclination for champagne frappé. It was only another tem-



porary invasion of Anglomania affecting only a few persons.

One curious incident of this time is that mentioned, in enumerating her gowns, by a lady who remarks that she had forgotten the one she wore on the days when an assassin had attempted to take the life of the king or one of his family. It had become the fashion to call at once at the Tuileries to congratulate the king after such escapes, which were very frequent, as we notice in reading the memoirs of the Prince de Joinville; and sad-colored garments were kept on hand for such occasions by those privileged to present themselves at the palace.



In 1848 the American Amelia Bloomer endeavored to make a way for the odd costume which has been resurrected in a modified form by bicycle-riders, though the modern "bloomers" bear more resemblance to a zouave's uniform than to Mrs. Bloomer's ideal. The original Bloomer-suit consisted of long full trousers, closely clasped at the ankle and ornamented there with frills. Above these were a short skirt with many ruffles, and a man's coat and vest with masculine accessories about the throat, absurdly topped by a broad-brimmed, beflowered, and essentially feminine Leghorn hat. Its ugliness defeated its good intentions.



Sleeves gradually grew smaller, and by 1850 fitted close to the upper arm with a long shoulder-seam, but flared slightly at the elbow. Italian straw bonnets were first introduced in the same year, and were smaller in size than before, with garlands of artificial flowers.

With their usual faculty for adopting foreign articles, the Parisians now wore Algerian burnouses as opera-cloaks. They had previously appeared in "Chinese tunics" and "vestes Polonaise,"—all with a Parisian touch of make and passementerie. Crêpe shawls, wonderfully embroidered by Chinese fingers, or pieces of tulle imitating Valenciennes lace, took the place of the Kashmir shawls prevalent at the beginning of this century.



Such were the steps by which fashion approached the crowning event in dress of the 19th century—the crinoline.

The fair dames of the Second Empire, whether short or tall, were forced into these iron cages by the inexorable decrees of the *modistes*. It is easy to see how the multiple petticoats, stiffened with starch or whalebones in the hem, and flaring out about the feet, until a woman of 1850 looked like a





pyramid, gradually rendered necessary some sort of framework to support their weight; but why the ugly crinoline should have remained in vogue so long is a mystery.

The fashion spread over all western Europe and America, penetrating the utmost fastnesses of the Rockies. Savages slipped into the hoopskirt which they had taken from their white victims, and flourished about in this airy costume. The pages of *Punch* about 1860 are filled with caricatures of the crinoline, showing the havoc caused by a maid-servant's hoops as she swirls among delicate bric-à-brac, or the disastrous effect of a lively breeze upon the voluminous draperies of her mistress.

It goes without saying that the "tilters," as they were dubbed by irreverent Yankees, were inconvenient. Even now we hear harrowing tales of young women immovably fixed on fences that they had attempted to scale, only to find themselves hung up helplessly upon some lurking nail that had maliciously caught one of the barrel-hoops that encircled them.

The light steel circles around the body were arranged into several different kinds of hoopskirts, but all wobbled ungracefully as the wearer walked, and the steel often snapped, with disastrous results to skin and clothing. In the house crinolines were even more inconvenient. A lady, writing of the times of Eugénie, Empress of the French, says that, "It was with difficulty that three women sunk in their cages could sit together in a boudoir. It was accompanied by a mixture of all fashions. One recorded toilet placed draperies à la Grecque over the amplitude of the panniers of Louis XVI, with the basques of the Amazons of the Frondé, and the hanging sleeves of the Renaissance." She adds: "It is from the date of this period that the usage, out of fashion to-day, of offering the arm to the women in the salons, or for accompanying them in the street, has been lost." One can appreciate this who has laughed at the efforts of the jovial highwayman in "Erminie" to dance with the



Princess, who was buttressed in a swaying, supple cone of steel which continually tripped him up.

When the crinoline had arrived at the period of its greatest expansion, women began to enlarge their knots of hair, which had been worn in Spanish fashion à l'Eugénie, who rolled it back from her forehead. From this developed, about 1862, the first chignons, which soon attained a vast size, eked out by false hair, which was braided, or jammed in a wad into a net, resting low upon the neck, while long ribbons fluttered from the top of the head. The ridiculous little hats tilted far forward, and familiar to us in war-time pictures, were naturally the only sort that such a coiffure would admit of.



The Sway of the Crinoline



The clinging shawls and scarfs of 1830, and the sometimes oddly shaped but not ungraceful mantles of the following decades, were superseded by bulky, bell-shaped wraps, of velvet or cloth, ugly in design, with long shoulder-seams, ill-made sleeves, and with skirts flaring widely over the crinoline. Bonnets, shaped like a scoop, were also worn, and were not unbecoming when seen from the front, framing the face in an oval of artificial flowers.

The Empress Eugenie, who had fostered the crinoline, suddenly revolted and in 1860, after her visit to the Alps, introduced short skirts, but this improvement had a brief existence. Some time before this Dr. Mary Walker had tried to introduce entirely masculine suits for feminine wearers. She wore a man's clothes her-

self, but only succeeded in being mobbed by the English audiences to whom she lectured, and laughed at by more tolerant and humor-loving Americans.

Slowly, but surely, as the Second Empire came to an end, and Eugenie was sent hurrying out of Paris, the crinoline decreased in size and finally disappeared. To the honor of Worth, be it said that he was one of those who assisted in its disappearance. The fashion had only one merit, we are told, that of concealing the figures of all women, and showing only the throat and shoulders by the low-cut corsage; and in this particular the stout women for once gained an advantage over their slender sisters, whose svelte figures lost all their grace.

Modern costume, after passing through the various stages of these "pull-back" skirts, which were strapped tightly across the knees, rendering a free step well-nigh impossible; of the "bustle," which carried the heavy folds at the back of the skirt on a platform projecting from the waist; and of kilted skirts and "jerseys," seems now (if we except the immense sleeves), to have reached a rational standpoint. One wears that which is most suitable for the moment, and the fashions of 1895 will not look so absurd to the eyes of the next century as will those of 1870.

